

“Universal” and “Unique” as the Categories of Comparative Literature

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Abstract: In this article, a notion of interliterary dialogue as a form of interliterary process is brought into comparative literature. Literary dialogue differs fundamentally from contact ties and typological convergences. It is ascertained that dialogue is a field of interliterary relations which generates meaning and is hard to rationalize. Dialogue has such characteristics as multilayer structure; heterogeneity; diversity of intersubjective ties and their mutual influence; unity of what is discontinuous and continuous, or regional (national) and universal. The nature of interliterary dialogue opens up on the basis of Russian and Tatar literature of different historical periods (second half of the 19th century-first third of the 20 century). Besides, the article detects the features of national identity and word art universals in the conditions of the dialogue between different cultures and literatures.

Key words: “one’s own” • “foreign” • National literature • Dialogue • Comprehension • Reader • Comparison • Juxtaposition

INTRODUCTION

In the 1990s, such themes as identity, comprehending the different, dialogue, tolerance and globalism were actively developed in a number of publications [1-5]. The problem of universals is one of the debatable questions in contemporary science. Word art universals traditionally mean different form-building and meta-content principles which are the constant basis of world literary process. According to their sources and the opportunities they give for philosophical and aesthetic cognition of man and being, these are universal phenomena that stand over nationality and history.

E.V. Haltrin-Khalturina shows the epistemology of fundamentally different approaches to the problem of “the universal”: “the universal” means something appeared under the determining influence of “the general”; or “the universal” means something determined by the plurality of its contents. The first approach is characterized by reductionism because “universal” model “is perceived as something that really exists in social thinking and as an essence that can be extracted by intellectual distillation and used as a yardstick for literary works” [6: 82]. The second approach presupposes that the identification of universally distributed processes, regularities and structures should inevitably follow the contemplation and

explanation of the specificity of their ethnic manifestation. At the same time we can clearly see the problem of description methods for universals and searching for the adequate metalanguage. M.Y. Lotman worked on this problem [7: 142]. M. Epshtein made a distinction between the universal and the general: “The universal is not the general inherent in many things but the much inherent in one thing” [8: 643].

With all the variety of approaches to this problem, researchers focus on the fact that art universals are semantic entities generated by stable and inalterable ways of artistic thought and self-expression. The juxtaposition of two or more literatures makes it possible to work out a new approach to this category. What is the essence of this approach, and how does this approach differ from the existing one?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Up until now, the comparative method of investigating national literatures-particularly Russian and Tatar literatures-has been basically reduced to the description of contact ties and typological convergences between them. But along with casually determined contact-genetic ties and typological convergences, there is another sphere of interliterary interactions in which one

can see the free interchange of artistic values. This interchange is based on dialogic relations that are principally open and unfinished. Besides, they accumulate the content energy of national literary-aesthetic development and the intellectual values of peoples.

The notions of “one’s own” and “foreign” are the representative essences of universal and unique semantic structures that come into being in interliterary dialogues. These are the central concepts of culture. They can help to comprehend the basic models of dialogic relations between national literatures. In juxtaposing investigation of national literatures, the “foreign” is a sign of different semantic position. “One’s own” point of view asserts and determinates itself in the dialogue with this position. The texts of other nationalities are considered as “foreign”; and their semiotic homogeneity and general symbolic meaning intensify.

The nature of “foreignness” is based on the contrasting of ethnolinguistic, ethic-confessional, spatial-geographical, social and other aspects [9: 222-232; 10; 11]. Moreover, the volume and content of “foreignness” constitute those parameters in which the dichotomous typologies of cultures are formulated. For example, the cosmocentric paradigm (or transcendental culture), correlated with the notion of “East”, is foreign to the anthropocentric paradigm correlated with the notion of “West”. In European culture, semantic units are organized by sorts and kinds. This is foreign to Arabic-Muslim poetics with its historically steady character. The dualism of Russian thinking not allowing for anything intermediate, gradual, mixed is contrasted with “eastern” man’s ideas about the inseparability of the part and the whole, or the man and the world and their consistency, concordance and inseparability. F.E. Schleiermacher interpreted the foreignness problem from the psychological point of view. H.-G. Gadamer, arguing with him, persisted in the hermeneutical approach to the tension created by the polarity of “one’s own” and “foreign” [12: 350].

Main Part: M. Bakhtin formulated the idea about the dialogue between cultures and literatures. If this idea is extrapolated to relations and interaction of different national literatures, it allows us to arrange and analyze the sorts of this dialogue in the context of different modifications for the categories of “one’s own” and “foreign”. The condition of the dialogue in any form of his existence can be reconstructed as a kind of balance between “one’s own” and “foreign” with confrontation, polemics, mutual transitions and the awareness of

similarity. Under these circumstances, literary process looks like a conceptual-semiotic space that includes the potentiality for generating new meanings.

The notions of “one’s own” and “foreign” are not only the categories of text reality. They also make it possible to single out an intermediate-general linking sphere that appears between two literatures and cultures. In other words, this is a “territory” for their meeting. Meanings formed by relations between “one’s own” and “foreign” do not exist out of these relations, cannot be excessively concretized. Besides, they are implicit and stand up against verbalization. They can be realized only in a “metaphysical distance” and dialogue space which takes place “against the background of the return comprehension of the invisible third that stands over both dialogue participants” [13: 306]. So, the dialogue between literatures-as possible and timely unfolding of meaningful relations-presupposes the world of “third” (“super-addressee”) that creates the semantic space in which “I” and “someone else” meet. In the works of M. Bakhtin and his followers, the notion of “third” is defined as a special substance of “being-comprehension”. Concrete dialogues appear to be the synergetic projection of this substance. The absolute super-addressee is a transcendent subject. He does not take part in dialogue but he understands it. He creates the vertical model of interliterary communication that can be likened cultural tree matrix [9: 300]. If participants are the basis of dialogue, then “third” walks down from his “super-position” and vanishes in author’s attitude. Comprehension transforms from the special state of consciousness to the mode of being. Tree’s vertical hierarchy is changed by rhizome cultural matrix (horizontally growing grass) [14: 301].

So, the concept of dialogue between literatures allows us to detect an independent instance in the system of interliterary process. This is a reader whose perceptive consciousness becomes a field for the dialogic meeting of two (or more) value-semantic orientations, positions or voices. The artistic whole, being an otherness of author’s consciousness, creates a “reader inside concept” [15: 209]. In the same way, interliterary process-first of all its subject architectonics-presupposes a postulated addressee [16] who has a real social-historical and cultural-psychological type of bilingual reader behind him. The perception of this bilingual reader is objectified in the statements of writers, critics, publicists and philologists.

Reader’s perceptive consciousness becomes a meeting field for two semantic and value outlooks. It forms the architectonics of dialogic relations between them:

- It highlights structural-semantic complexes and aesthetic constructions in which the uniqueness and originality of each national literature manifests itself;
- It updates the regional specificity of literary texts and things that determines their embeddedness into “western” or “eastern” culture;
- It finds the opportunity to universalize perceived meanings and opens meta-textual and inter-textual intention in them;
- It interprets texts of different national literatures from the point of view of their generality taking into account that they express some cultural and historic program.

In the course of dialogue between cultures and literatures, its participants enter the world of other artistic and aesthetic values. Moreover, they find their unique places in “zone of contact” with “foreign” cognitive, ethic and aesthetic meanings. In these conditions, the “foreign” either transforms to “other”, “alien”, “new” and finally “one’s own” or remains something that could not and should not be used in one’s own practice. The “foreign” space is perceived as unreachable, incomprehensible and the limit for “one’s own”. That is why it is conceptually important to set a limit where the “one’s own” meets the “foreign” realizes and manifests itself. The logic and semantic structure of interliterary dialogue with its value-semiotic basis and poetics depends on where the subject of interliterary dialogue sets the limit. He may distinguish himself from or realize the similarity.

The creative potential of aesthetic perception is maximally fulfilled in the position of reader as a subject of the dialogue between literatures. The addressee acts as a constitutive and constructive basis of interliterary communication and obtains the experience of deep involvement into the world in its diversity, dynamics, complexity and uniqueness. Standing between those who speak different languages, he unites the parted and brings them from their potentiality to the current changing historical being. Creative self-determination takes place on the value field of the consciousnesses [see: 17].

Every national literature is identical to itself. It creates a unique wholeness and constitutes its identity as “foreign” for others. The differences between “one’s own” and “foreign” are essential for comprehending the national identity of national artistic systems that begin a dialogue and their peculiarities in acting on the value field of world culture as unique intellectual and practical entities. It is the differences between two literatures that form the word-conceptual space of a dialogue. Besides,

they initiate directional processes of creating sense. These processes can be centripetal-if they reveal the development potential of national identity-and centrifugal-if they take into account the diversity of artistic and aesthetic traditions and form new unification models-“interliterary syntheses”. They are generated by new meanings that determine the phenomenology, semantic structure and functioning of word art universals.

The above judgments can be illustrated by the comparative analysis of Russian literary works created the second half of the 19th century and Tatar literary works of the first third of the 20th century. The selection of the material is determined by the fact that there are contact ties and typological convergences between I.S. Turgenev, F.M. Dostoyevsky, L.N. Tolstoy, etc. on the one part, and F. Amirkhan, G. Ibragimov, G. Iskhaki, S. Kamal and G. Rakhim on the other part. Besides, the selection is caused by the representativeness of analyzed Russian literary works to realist novel type in its national form. Moreover, the selection is determined by epic genres formed in Tatar literature in the first third of the 20th century. The structure and functions of these genres are similar to the phenomena of Russian novels of the second half of the 19th century.

Tatar prose of the first third of the 20th century represents equal relations between the whole and the part, the phenomenon and the essence, the form and the content, the subjective and the objective. Such relations are inherent in “eastern” aesthetic perception in general. In Russian classical literature, the regularities of sense creation and the functioning of artistic forms are mainly connected with dualism of these categories. Author creates the being, and the characters try to transform the matter. Even if a character does not have an active role, the author represents him and the readers perceive him in the continuum “character-environment” with prevailing attention towards its first component.

In Tatar literature, being is valuable as such. It is preset as a world of moral and aesthetic harmony. It acts on behalf of the author and then the reader. In the context of artistic and aesthetic aspect, this self-awareness was realized in communicative strategy which is typical for parables. Tatar writers have a concrete moral and ethic goal and build the verbal-ideological world of a literary work from a “high hierarchical position” (M.M. Bakhtin). The main idea is objectified with the help of various relations of “pointing out the meaning”: the methods of metaphorical and symbolic equivalence and parallelism; special arrangement of text when certain episodes forestall further events by means of symbols, gestures and poetic

figures of speech. As a rule, meditative elements, author's subjective speech, his attitude and judgments, etc. cut in the narration. The monologic concentration of characters on their emotional state and self-determination in Tatar literature is contrasted with the dynamic contentious model of events and dialogues inherent in the dramatic concept of Russian novel in the second half of 19th century.

As a rule, plot is the aesthetic dominant in Russian literary works. Descriptive elements are subordinated to its goals and secondary towards the narration. Narrative structures are mainly alien to the rhetoric of teaching, imperative and monologic speech. The search for "competent" and "indisputable" word and appropriate communicative strategies are more typical to the works of I.S. Turgenev, F.M. Dostoyevsky, L.N. Tolstoy, etc. The performed contrasting corresponds to leading trends of Russian and Tatar literatures. It should be admitted that there are borderline phenomena in real practice of Russian and Tatar literature. They do not fit in the framework of this contrasting.

Two literatures with fundamentally different relations between the form and the content, the whole and the part, and the external and internal borders of artistic image "meet" in reader's mind. This causes problems of stable semantic structures. For example, problems appear in "procedures" of sense creation existing in different cultures. They reveal themselves in the principles of artistic generalization and relevant communicative strategies. Besides, problems appear in logic-semantic relations that subordinate the type of conflict, the principles of plot building, character image creation, reproduction and understanding of some life character.

The difference and uniqueness of two national literary-artistic systems make for their complementary and the enrichment and broadening of recipient's artistic ideas. This is how the opposition generates new meanings that overcome it. Their content and functions are tolerant. Just those new meanings determine the functional and structure-content peculiarities of the category of the universal which is used in literature.

Summary: So, the comparative analysis of literary works belonging to different national literatures helps to understand how the universals of word art work and how literature's national identity can be realized. Such notions as context, process and event are highlighted in this analysis. The cognitive methods used in this analysis include descriptive, narrative, logic-discursive and

figurative-metaphoric methods. The specificity of proposed approach to the category of the universal consists in the fact that this approach is based on distancing logics, the principles of analogy, non-excluding opposition and transfinite principle [18: 173]. Moreover, it reveals the significance of such aspects of this category as inter-subjectivity, communicativeness, creativeness, historicity and eventfulness. Besides, this approach emphasizes the non-linear, discrete and dynamic character of new semantic structures appearing in interliterary dialogues.

CONCLUSIONS

The meta-meanings of dialogic relations between national literatures lead to building a multidimensional and multilevel picture of interliterary process. In this process, there are different world-view systems, value orientations, types of imaginative thinking and idea-aesthetic traditions coexist and interact [19: 43]. In this approach, the methodology of juxtaposing becomes a way of developing a new conceptual space of mutual enrichment and mutual presentation of artistic and aesthetic traditions. Besides, it becomes a method for creating a pluralistic development model for national literatures. It states the value-semantic inexhaustibility of dialogic relations between them.

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